



Preliminary Ecological Assessment

Mount View High Roding CM6 1NP.

May 2023

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1.0 Non-technical summary

1.1 To understand the site's ecology, this appraisal has outlined the likely impacts, and opportunities for mitigation, compensation, and enhancement.

1.2 A desktop search for designated sites and habitats was undertaken using the Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website and Promap. In addition, an extended Phase I Habitat Survey of the land and the likely presence of protected species.

1.3 Natural England has not designated the site as a habitat for its importance for nature conservation at the national, regional or county level. The likelihood of protected species is negligible, and no additional surveys are needed.

2.0 Introduction

Purpose of the report

2.1 The survey aimed to assess potential ecological features, including the likely presence of rare or protected habitats and species within the zone of influence concerning the project. The key objectives are:

- Identify the potential ecological constraints associated with the project;
- Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required;
- Identify any additional surveys that may be necessary; and,
- Identify the opportunities offered by the project to deliver ecological enhancement.

2.2 As the British Standard BS 42020:2013 advised,¹ an appraisal by a suitably qualified professional ecologist is undertaken to ensure a rigorous and thorough independent review. The assessment has followed the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management Guidelines,² which is proportionate to the scale of the project.

2.3 The preliminary ecological appraisal outlines the likely impact, and opportunities for mitigation, compensation and enhancement. The assessment also considers whether consultation with statutory bodies is necessary and whether consent or licences are required.

¹ Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, BS 42020:2013.

² CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition, and CIEEM (2017) Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Qualifications and Competence of the Author

2.4 The author has over 25 years of conservation experience. Founder of a new conservation charity and previously worked as Head of Conservation for a Wildlife Trust, Director of Studies for the Field Studies Council and Course Director and Lecturer for the University of Essex and Cambridge.

2.5 The author has been nationally recognised by respected organisations and has been awarded various fellowships for his 'outstanding or significant contribution' towards these disciplines, including conservation and biodiversity for the delivery of landscape-scale conservation projects.

2.6 Currently on the external advisory board for the University of Essex and representing the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management at the University of Southampton, judging national ecological projects and as an ecological expert for the Southwood Foundation.

3.0 Scope of works

Legislation and planning policy

3.1 This Preliminary Ecological Assessment has been undertaken regarding the relevant wildlife legislation and planning policies (Appendix 1).

Legislation

3.2 Relevant legislation considered within the scope of this document includes the following:

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended);

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000; and,

Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

National Planning Policy Framework

3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.³ For example, planning law requires that

³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021

the development plan determine applications for planning permission unless material consideration indicates otherwise.

3.4 Material planning considerations include:

local, strategic, national planning policies and policies in the development plan;
emerging new plans which have already been through at least one stage of public consultation;
government and planning inspectorate requirements, such as circulars, statutory instruments, guidance and advice; and,
adverse impacts on nature conservation interest and biodiversity opportunities.

Biodiversity Net Gain

3.5 National policy sets out that planning should provide biodiversity net gains where possible. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 174(d), 179(b) and 180(d) and the Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) refer to this policy requirement.

3.6 The Government's 25-Year Environment Plan aims to mainstream net biodiversity gain in the planning system and move towards approaches integrating natural capital benefits.

4.0 Methodology

Desk Study

4.1 A search for designated sites and habitats was undertaken using the Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (www.magic.gov.uk) and Promap. The data collated will inform the impacts of the proposed works, ensuring that suitable mitigation and protection measures are considered.

4.2 A desktop study search was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites. In addition, internet-based aerial mapping services were used to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features in the broader landscape.

4.3 No biological records were requested at this stage. Instead, a search on Natural England's magic website for any European Protected Species licence that has been granted. These licences allow the licence holder to safeguard European Protected Species from adverse impacts associated with the development and other potentially damaging activity.

Habitat Survey

4.4 The vegetation and habitat types are classified regarding the UK Habitat Classification. The UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) is a comprehensive habitat classification system for the UK to provide outputs suitable for ecological impact assessment, habitat metrics and better data integration between organisations.⁴ The UKHab translates easily into Priority Habitat Types and Annex 1 Habitat Types. In addition, an evaluation of the site to support protected species.

Protected Species

4.5 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on-site, based on the habitat suitability and any direct evidence. The evaluation should not be taken as providing a complete and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time of the study. Additional surveys may be recommended if, based on this assessment, it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

Buildings and other structures

4.6 Any buildings or other structures on site were surveyed. The surveys comprised an external visual inspection and an internal search (where safety allowed) to look for signs of, or potential for, protected species. Indicators could consist of live animals, carcasses, droppings, feeding remains and nesting material. A ladder, high-powered torch, and angled mirror were available as required.

5.0 Results

Site location and description

5.1 The site was surveyed on the 16th of May, 2023. The weather was light clouds and a gentle breeze, with a temperature around 14°C. A risk assessment was completed, and all appropriate PPE was worn. The client granted the surveyor access to the site.

Desk Study

Designated sites and habitats of principal importance

⁴ Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2020) The UK Habitat Bank Classification User Manual Version 1.1.

5.2 The following habitats were recorded:

Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation within 5km: No (Appendix 2)

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km: No (Appendix 3)

Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland within 1km: Yes (Appendix 4)

Priority habitat within 100 metres: Yes (Appendix 5)

Ponds within 500 metres: No

River, streams or water-filled ditches within 100 metres: Yes

5.3 No protected species were granted a European licence with 1 km (Appendix 6). The site is within the amber great crested newt risk zone.

Habitat Survey

Building and Hard Standing

5.4 No hardstanding or buildings were present.

Vegetated garden

5.5 It appears that the adjacent dwelling has extended the garden. The habitat now resembles a modified grassland including cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), rough meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*) and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) around the edges. Ornamental planting and fruit trees were present.

Protected Species

Habitat Suitability for Badger (*Meles meles*)

5.6 Badgers (*Meles meles*) are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This legislation makes it an offence to kill or injure a badger, damage or destroy a sett, or disturb a badger whilst it occupies a sett. The site and a 30m buffer (where accessible), were surveyed for badger evidence, such as setts, latrines, pathways, footprints, snuffle holes and badger hairs. Any setts recorded were classified according to published criteria (Harris, et al., 1989).

5.7 There were no suitable habitats for suitable sett building habitat for badgers on site. No evidence in the form of paths, prints, foraging, latrines or runs was noted. This species needs no further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

5.8 All breeding wild birds are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended). Offences of taking, damaging or destroying a nest or eggs; barn

owls receive special additional protection under Schedule 1 of the WCA. Barn owls (and other Schedule 1 species) are protected from any form of intentional or reckless disturbance when they are nesting or rearing dependent young. Any such activity constitutes an offence.

5.9 There were no roosting or breeding opportunities for barn owls (*Tyto alba*) within the site. Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Bats

5.10 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; as European Protected Species (EPS). This makes it an offence to kill or injure a bat, or damage or destroy a place of shelter or protection.

5.11 Potential for the site to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats was assessed in line with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016). Buildings or structures were assessed for suitability to support roosting bats according to the classifications (Appendix 2). Any potential roosting features (PRFs), sites and roost access points were highlighted. Evidence of bats was also searched for externally and internally where access was allowed. Equipment available to aid inspection included binoculars, a ladder, and a high-powered torch.

5.12 The surveyor looked for bats, droppings, staining, scratch marks and feeding remains in any potentially suitable locations. Trees were also assessed for potential bat roosting features such as rotten cavities, woodpecker holes, cracked or split limbs, and lifted bark. Trees displaying potential features were assigned a level of suitability for roosting bats.

5.13 The site was also assessed for overall value for foraging, commuting or dispersing bats (i.e. how well the habitats on the site link to other offsite habitats and in particular the presence of sheltered linear habitats on the site).

5.14 There were moderate features with the potential to support roosting bats, foraging and commuting. Therefore, this species needs further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Breeding Birds

5.15 All birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to take, damage or destroy the nests of wild birds whilst being built or in use.

5.16 Buildings, other structures and vegetation were assessed for suitability to support any species of nesting bird. This included searching for evidence of nesting or roosting barn owls or other raptors. The habitats and general location of the site were assessed for their overall likely value to birds, including the likelihood for bird species of conservation importance to use the site.

5.17 Birds were observed on-site. Therefore, this group needs further consideration or a survey.

Habitat Suitability for Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

5.18 Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This makes it an offence to kill or injure dormice, or damage or destroy a place of shelter or protection.

5.19 Dormice favour ancient and mature woodland with good structural diversity and understorey. Hedgerows can be important as dispersal routes, but only if well connected to optimal habitat. They require a diverse food source throughout their active season (May to Oct). Being very territorial, dormice usually remain within 80 metres of their nests.

5.20 There is no suitable habitat to support Dormice within the site boundary. Therefore, this species will not require further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*)

5.21 All life stages of the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and their habitats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as a European Protected Species.

5.22 The site was assessed for suitability to support amphibians, including great crested newts (GCN), common toads (species of conservation importance) and common frogs. The assessment was undertaken in accordance with Gent & Gibson (2003) and Langton et al., (2001).

5.23 A search for all waterbodies on site or within a 500m radius was completed using maps and aerial imagery. A focus on those within a 250m radius was applied, which is generally considered to be the critical distance of dispersal by most amphibians. Consideration was given to how well any identified waterbodies were connected to the site in terms of terrestrial

habitat quality and features. Any obvious barriers to dispersal or unsuitable habitat were identified.

5.24 The site contains suitable habitat features for amphibians to be present. Therefore, this group of species needs further consideration.

Habitat Suitability for Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

5.25 In the UK, otters (*Lutra lutra*) are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to kill or injure otters, or damage or destroy a place of shelter or protection.

5.26 The habitats within and immediately adjacent to the site do not provide suitable habitats for this species. No evidence of Eurasian Otter was recorded on-site and therefore required no further surveys.

Habitat Suitability for Reptiles

5.27 All British reptile species are afforded protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to kill or injure reptile species including grass snakes (*Natrix helvetica*), adder (*Vipera berus*), common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*).

5.28 The site was assessed for suitability to support reptiles with reference to (Gent & Gibson, 2003) and Froglife Advice Sheet 10.

5.29 The habitat within the site offered negligible foraging, commuting, shelter, and hibernation opportunities. Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)

5.30 Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to kill or injure water voles, damage or destroy a place of shelter or protection, or disturb them in these places. They have also been listed as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) Priority Species.

5.31 Revised legislation now requires any development which will involve the displacement of water voles from their habitat or their relocation; to be completed either by a water vole survey class licence-holding ecologist or under a specific Natural England project licence.

5.32 There was no suitable habitat to support water voles. Therefore, this species requires no further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for White Clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

5.33 White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to kill or injure white-clawed crayfish, or damage or destroy a place of shelter or protection. They have also been listed as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) Priority Species.

5.34 There was no suitable habitat within the site to support white-clawed crayfish.

Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

5.35 Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are listed under the Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force in 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. These are habitats and species that had been identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities.

5.36 Hedgehogs regularly occur in urban environments as well as more rural locations. In addition, hedgehogs may use the site for foraging and shelter. There was no evidence of hedgehogs on the site and the site was unsuitable for foraging or shelter.

Invertebrates

5.37 Many invertebrates are listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority species and as Species of Principal Importance (Section 41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

5.38 The habitats were not considered of importance to notable invertebrates in the locality. Apart from field observation during the walkover survey, the site was not evaluated in detail for the likely presence of important invertebrates. Surveys require specialist methods, timings and equipment and are seasonally restricted, with samples collected over a number of months and removed from the site for expert identification.

5.39 The site provided typical and common habitats and species assemblage of an urban area. No notable habitats or plant species which may support invertebrates of interest in the locality were recorded. This group needs no further consideration or survey.

Invasive Species

5.40 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal legislation dealing with non-native species. It is illegal to release or allow escape into the wild, any animal which is not ordinarily resident in Great Britain and is not a regular visitor to Great Britain in a wild state, or is listed in Schedule 9 to the Act. It is also illegal to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any plant listed in Schedule 9 to the Act.

5.41 No invasive species were encountered at the time of the survey which requires any management.

Survey Constraints

5.42 The survey was undertaken during the optimal survey season. Given the nature of the site, an accurate record of the habitats and species present was recorded. It may be that additional plant species were present, which were not visible at the survey time. It is important to note that species diversity and dominant plant assemblages may increase or change throughout the season.

5.43 Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. However, the survey provides a general assessment of the potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.

6.0 Conclusion

Habitats

6.1 The site is not designated for its importance for nature conservation at an international, national, regional or county level. The site itself and the habitats found on-site are common and widespread throughout the UK,⁵ and the habitats are of limited ecological value and only site value.⁶

Protected species

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework, 2021, paragraph 175.

⁶ CIEEM, 2006, Defining ecological values for component habitats.

6.2 Habitats for protected species were evaluated for their likelihood of providing shelter, roosting, foraging, basking and nesting habitat.⁷ The likelihood of protected species is negligible, and no further investigation is needed.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 A biodiversity impact assessment with any biodiversity enhancement should include native species mixed to improve diversity and adapt to climate change.

⁷ National Planning Policy Framework, 2021, paragraph 180.

Appendix 1: Legislation and planning policy

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Full legislation available – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended)

Full legislation available – The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit)

Regulations 2019 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Full legislation available – Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

Full legislation available – <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Full legislation available – <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents>

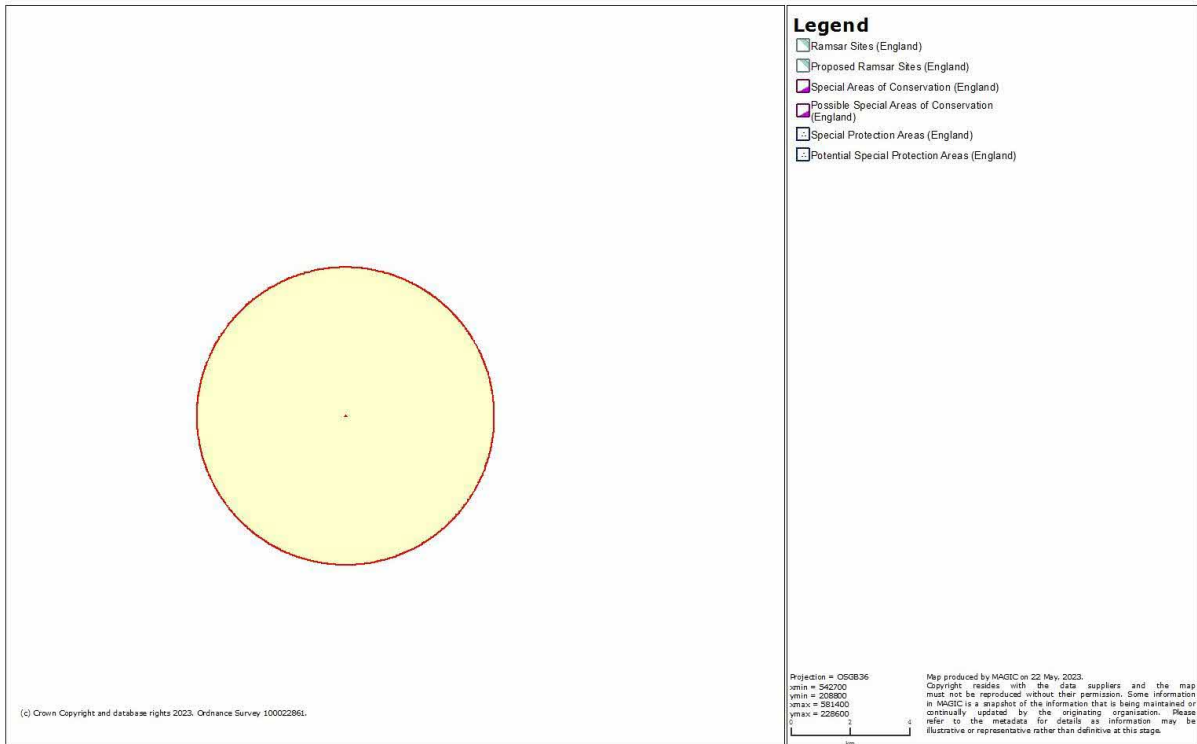
Appendix 2: Bat Roost Assessment Criteria & Classification

Bat Roost Assessment Criteria & Classification (adapted from Collins, 2016)

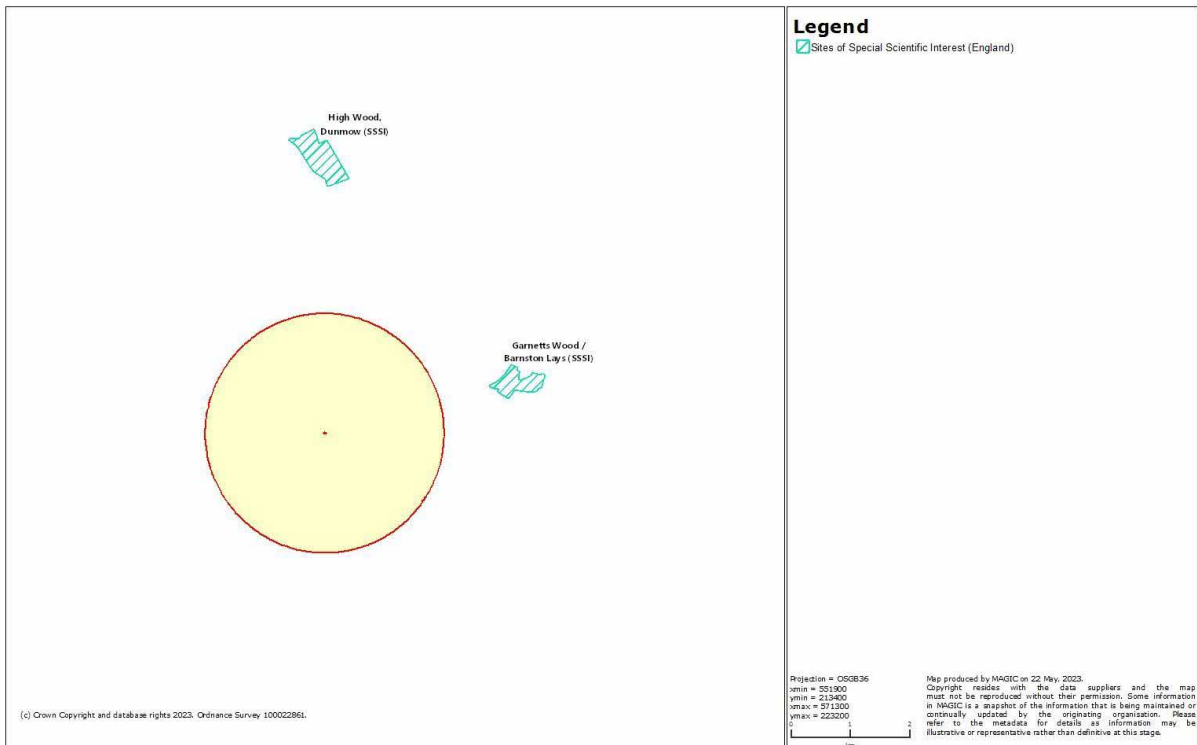
Suitability	Description of Potential Roosting Features (PRFs)	Commuting & Foraging Habitat
NEGLIGIBLE	Negligible roosting features on site that are likely to be used by bats.	Negligible habitat features on site are likely to be used by foraging or commuting bats.
LOW	<p>A structure with one or more features that could be opportunistically used by individual bats. Unlikely to support maternity or hibernation roosts.</p> <p>A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.</p>	Habitat which could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy/defunct hedgerow, unvegetated stream/ditch, isolated scrub (not well connected to surrounding landscape by another habitat), or lone tree (not in parkland situation).
MODERATE	<p>A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat (unlikely to support roosts of high conservation status).</p> <p>A tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These trees are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.</p>	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting, such as lines of trees, scrub, watercourses, grassland or interlinked gardens.

Suitability	Description of Potential Roosting Features (PRFs)	Commuting & Foraging Habitat
HIGH	<p>A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for long periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.</p> <p>A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a regular basis and potentially for long periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.</p>	<p>Continuous, high-quality habitat which is well connected to the wider landscape is highly likely to be used regularly by commuting bats. Habitats such as tree-lined watercourses, river valleys, hedgerows, grazed parkland, lines of trees, broadleaved woodland and woodland edges.</p> <p>The site is close to or connected to known roosts.</p>

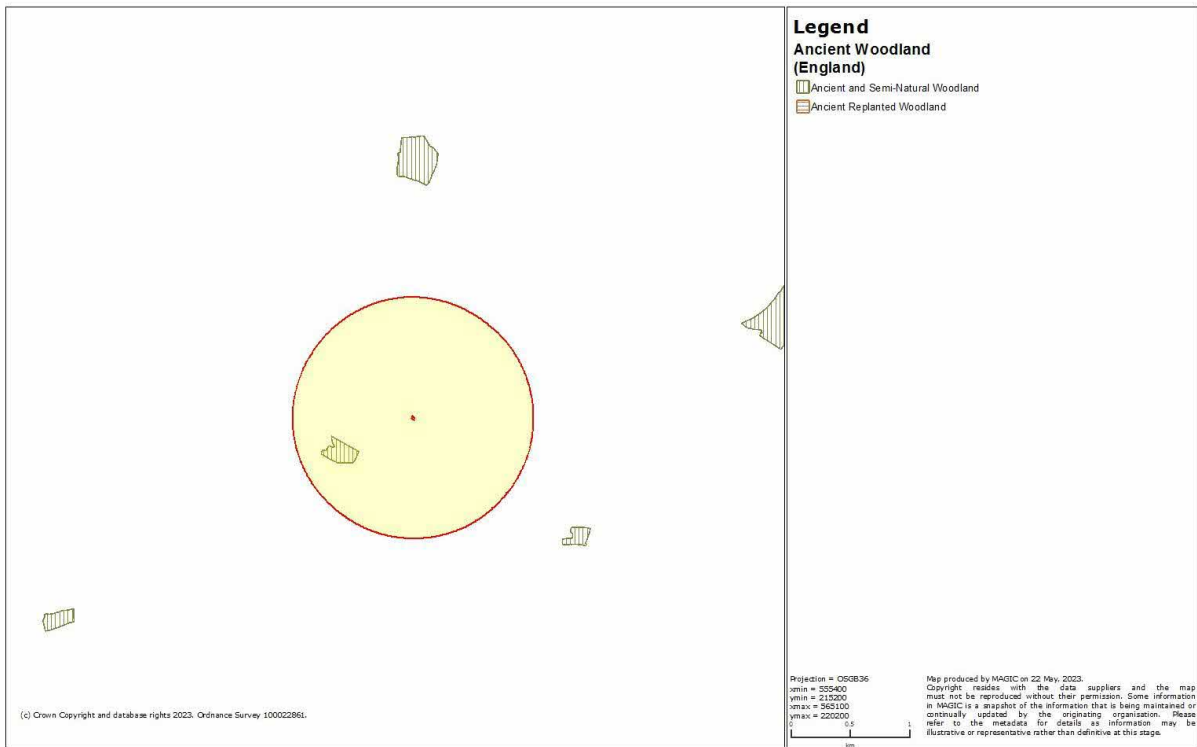
Appendix 3: International Designated sites



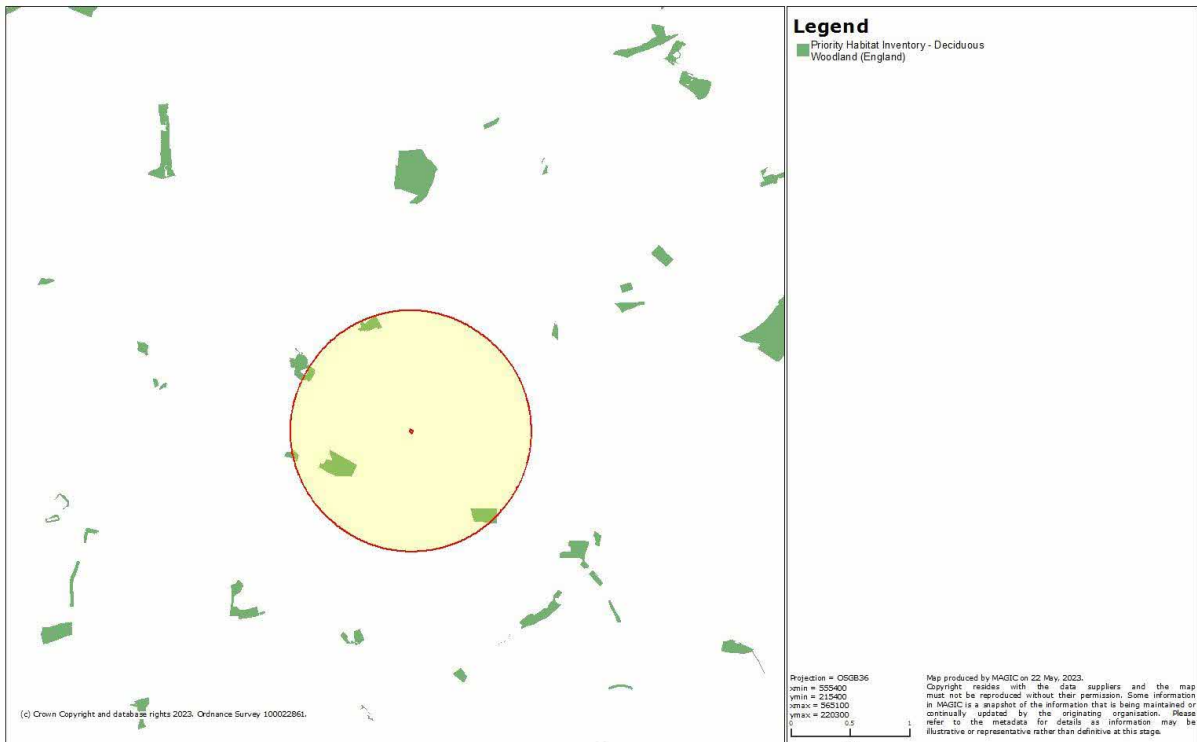
Appendix 4: National Designated Sites SSSI



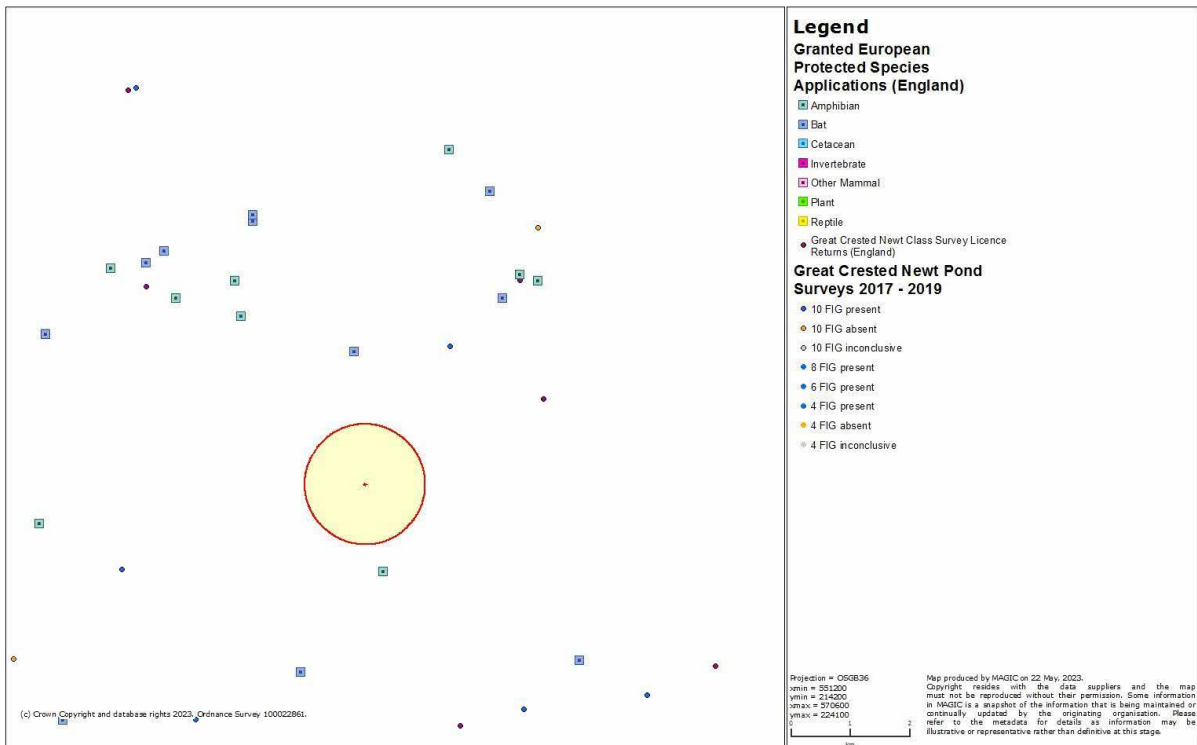
Appendix 5: Ancient Woodland



Appendix 6: Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat



Appendix 7: European protected species licence



Appendix 8: Photographic evidence

Photograph 1: Vegetated garden

